



What Does “Intending to Vote” Mean?

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HARVARD Kennedy School
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Faculty Research Working Paper Series

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What Does “Intending to Vote” Mean?

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Abstract

How accurate are responses to questions about intentions to vote in an upcoming election? Questions of this type are studied in a range of work in political science to understand the effects of other factors on political engagement, as well as in public opinion research. We analyze six phone surveys conducted over two elections which include pre-election vote intention and post-election vote validation (N=24,303). As expected, many who report intending to vote actually do not vote (13% and 54% for the two elections). More surprisingly, high rates people who predicted they would *not* vote actually do vote (56% and 39%). For both forms of inaccurate self-prediction, respondents were much more accurate when predicting that they would behave consistently with their past behavior than when predicting that they would behave inconsistently with their past behavior. We discuss implications for political science research, behavioral prediction, election administration, and public opinion.

How accurate are responses to questions about respondents' intentions to vote in an upcoming election? Self-reported vote intention is studied in a range of work in political science to understand the effects of other factors on political engagement. Additionally, assessing respondents' likelihoods of voting is of critical value for political public opinion research. Despite its importance, the validity of this question has been surprisingly understudied. This manuscript analyzes a unique collection of six pre-election surveys with post-election vote validation, five from the 2008 US Presidential Election and another from the 2009 New Jersey General Election, to assess how accurate people are at predicting their likelihoods of voting. The goal of this manuscript is to explore the relationship between responses offered when respondents are asked to report their likelihood of voting, and their actual likelihood of voting.

We discover three patterns of note. First, consistent with research on social desirability, a meaningful fraction of those who say they *will* vote, do not. Second, a surprising proportion of respondents who say they will *not* vote, in fact, do vote – a proportion that rivals the proportion who erroneously predict that they will vote but, in fact, do not vote. Third, both forms of inaccurate self-prediction follow a similar pattern: people are more accurate when predicting they will behave consistently with their past behavior than when predicting they will behave inconsistently with their past behavior. That is, *frequent* voters are more accurate predicting that they *will* vote, whereas *infrequent* voters are more accurate predicting that they will *not* vote.

These findings contribute to our understanding of when people will be more and less accurate in forecasting their future behavior, in particular their future voting behavior. These findings cast doubt on the degree to which self-reported intention to vote questions predict actual future behavior and should be used to make inferences about political life. Practically, these findings also shed light on a significant and previously underappreciated flaw in common likely

voter screens used to identify a probable electorate – the high rate of voting among people who report intending to not vote. In the discussion we probe the implications of these findings for political science research, the validity of behavioral prediction, design of policies relating to voter registration, and public opinion research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intention to Vote as a Dependent Variable in Political Science.

Self-reported intention to vote has been a commonly used dependent variable as political scientists have attempted to understand the effects of other factors on political engagement.¹ For example, the original research on the effects of negative advertising on engagement used this question as its principal dependent variable to support the argument that “going negative” demotivates the electorate (Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1995; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon 1999; for a recent review, see Brooks 2006). Similarly, research on televised incivility used self-reported intention to vote to capture the consequences of combative television culture on political life (Mutz & Reeves 2005). Research on the impact of campaign activities has used self-reported intention to vote to show the degree to which campaigns influence political engagement (Hillygus 2005). Work on how expectations about the participation of others affect political engagement have used self-reported intention to vote to show that citizens are more motivated to vote when they believe turnout will be relatively high as opposed to relatively low (Gerber & Rogers 2009). Finally, recent research examining the impact of party affiliation on

¹ Psychologists also use questions involving intention to vote. For example, Fast and colleagues (2009) use intention to vote as a dependent variable to show the effects of increasing perceived power on general engagement.

political behaviors found that inducing people to identify with a party made them more likely to intend to vote in an upcoming election (Gerber, Huber, & Washington 2010). These examples highlight that self-reported intention to vote has been a commonly used dependent variable in political science research, which helps to motivate the present research.

Difficulties predicting turnout.

Several papers have addressed the accuracy of turnout self-predictions, almost always focusing on identifying the optimal strategy for predicting turnout. Any review of this research must begin with Perry (1960, 1979) who wrestled with this problem extensively for The Gallup Organization. He developed several versions of a multiple-question battery to identify who would actually vote. The motivation for this research appears to have been eliminating those who were merely saying they would vote when, in fact, they would not. Of course, this is a sensible goal as it is common for respondents to say they intend to vote then not actually go and vote. However, this paper identifies reason for the opposite concern: respondents who predict they will not vote but then do so.

Several research teams have developed multiple-question batteries using the most recent ANES validated vote data, from 1980, 1984, and 1988 (Murray, Riley and Scime, 2009; Freedman and Goldstein, 1996). These datasets are relatively small compared to the datasets from which the current manuscript was developed, and the data in these datasets is from elections two to three decades ago as opposed to elections around which the current data were collected – the 2008 U.S. Presidential election and the 2009 New Jersey General Election.

The most recent election for which we were able to find a paper regarding errors in turnout prediction was the 2009 Philadelphia Municipal election. Dimock, Keeter, Schulman and Miller (2001) aimed to improve on Perry's multiple-question batteries by considering new

questions and different model specifications. Those authors matched the interviews of 1,694 respondents to the municipal voter file, and were thus able to determine if a given respondent voted or not.

Dimock and colleagues (2001) asked two direct questions about the respondents' intentions to vote. First, they asked respondents if they planned to vote using a binary yes/no scale. Among respondents who could be matched to the voter file, 97% had reported that they planned to vote. The authors do not report the percentage who actually voted among the 3% of respondents who reported that they did not intend to vote. The second question measured intention to vote on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the strongest intention, and 1 being the weakest intention. The authors reported that of the 1,694 respondents 7% offered an answer between 1 and 6, and 39% of them actually voted.² That such a substantial number of those who reported weak intentions to vote did, in fact, vote is striking. The research described in this manuscript builds on this finding.

Prediction Errors

There has been substantial research on errors in retrospective reporting of voter turnout, typically referred to as “over-reporting” (see Tourangeau, Rips, and Rainski, 2000; Silver, Abramson and Anderson, 1986). That work looks at how accurate respondents are recalling whether or not they voted in the past. The present research explores people's beliefs about future behavior. While behavioral self-prediction is subtly different from behavioral intention, we view

² Mann (2003) finds a similar result but with a very small sample size: 27 respondents offer “less than 50-50” or “Definitely will not vote” and 7 actually did vote (26%).

them as functionally similar: they are both an articulation of expectations regarding one's own future behavior.

The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that intentions about future behavior and actual future behaviors are more closely correlated when a person's attitude toward the behavior is positive (i.e., the person believes the behavior is desirable), when the person believes others think the behavior is desirable, and whether the person feels that performing the desired behavior is within her control (Ajzen, 1991). Voting is typically personally and socially desirable, as well as generally perceived as being within a person's control. This suggests that voting is exactly the kind of domain where the Theory of Planned Behavior would predict there to be strong correspondence between self-prediction and behavior. However, this is not what we find.

STUDY 1

Method

The dataset for Study 1 comes from five surveys using two types of sampling frames. The first dataset was collected for an anonymous client of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. It used lists of registered voters with valid landline telephone numbers, provided by the voter file vendor Catalist, LLC. Catalist centralizes and maintains voter files from all state in the United States. This dataset included four surveys conducted over three months. The second dataset was collected for Democracy Corps, a 501 c(3) independent non-profit research organization. It used random digit dialing (RDD) prescreened for households with valid landline phones by Survey Sampling International. This dataset included just one survey. The relevant portion of all surveys in Study 1 is the self-reported vote likelihood question.

Survey

Both datasets are based on interviews conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with data collection stratified by region. All surveys were conducted by the same call center, with the same supervising staff and training procedure. Table 1 describes the combined dataset.

All interviews included the same likely voter screen question asking respondents the following:

What are the chances of you voting in the election for president in November: are you almost certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or don't you think you will vote?

If the respondent answered “50-50”, “will not vote” or volunteered that they “do not know”, the interview was terminated. If the respondent answered “almost certain to vote” or “will probably vote”, he or she was deemed to be a likely voter and the interview was continued. In these cases interviews generally lasted around twenty minutes. For calls to the RDD sample, respondents were asked their age, gender, and first name. For calls to the voter file sample, interviewers confirmed the name of the respondent. Thus, age, gender, first name, and phone number were available for all participants.

The proportion of respondents who refused to answer the likelihood of voting question and for whom we have data was quite small ($< 1\%$). This group is excluded from subsequent analyses.

Voting History

Post-election, surveys were merged to the national voter file provided by Catalist, allowing us to study 2008 General Election vote history. Some states do not disclose individual

vote histories, and some states did not release vote histories in time for the data analysis, therefore interviews from 39 states were included in the present analyses³.

For interviews completed using random-digit dial sampling (i.e., all Democracy Corps interviews) respondents were matched to the voter file using the phone number dialed, interviewer report of respondent's gender and self-reported age. Of these interviews, 54% matched the voter file using these criteria. For interviews completed calling from the voter file, respondents were matched after the election to the voter file using the name on the sample file, the phone number dialed, interviewer report of respondent's gender and self-reported age. Of these interviews, 93% matched the voter file using these criteria. Of 12,979 interviews with valid data collected for the intention to vote question, we matched 2008 General Election vote history to 11,025 interviews. All subsequent analyses reflect the data associated with only the interviews that matched the voter file.

***** [TABLE 1 HERE]*****

Self-Prediction Accuracy

In the following we sometimes display our findings in terms of self-prediction “accuracy.” We define an accurate self-prediction as when a respondent who reported that she was “almost certain to vote” actually voted, and when a respondent who reported that she “will

³ The 39 states included in the analysis are, AK, AL, AR, CO, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SD, TN, UT, VT, WA, and WI.

not vote” actually did not vote. For discussions of accuracy we exclude those who responded that they would “probably vote” and that they had a “50-50” chance of voting because it is not obvious what it would mean for these to be accurate predictions. It is common for practitioners to force these four response options into two categories, those in the likely electorate (those offering “almost certain to vote” and “probably vote”) and those not in the likely electorate (those offering “50-50” and “will not vote”). Indeed, this is how the original researchers determined which respondents to terminate and which to continue the interview with. We also report the raw percentage of respondents from each response category who actually voted regardless of their prediction accuracy.

Results

Table 2 compares self-reported likelihood of voting in the 2008 General Election with actual turnout records. A cursory glance reveals three patterns of note. First, 54.8% of those who report that they will not vote, in fact, do vote. Notice also that as a respondent’s self-reported likelihood to vote increased, the actual likelihood of voting increased, providing an internal validity check. Second, 13.3% of those who reported being almost certain to vote did not vote. This is consistent with social desirability bias research, according to which people may have knowingly reported false intentions, but could also result from unanticipated obstacles preventing respondents from voting despite their otherwise genuine intention. Third, we find that the percentage of those who voted despite predicting that they would not (54.7%) is significantly larger than the percentage of those who did not vote despite predicting that they would (13.3%), ($\chi^2(1, N = 9473) = 277.5, p < .001$).

***** [TABLE 2 HERE]*****

Temporal Distance and Accuracy of Prediction.

Were self-reported likelihoods of voting more accurate as the election approached? One might suspect that as Election Day neared respondents might have had introspective access to information useful to predicting their future behavior. Table 3 shows turnout rate for each response option as a function of when the interview occurred. If respondents gained insight into their likely voting behavior as the election approached, we would hypothesize that errors in turnout predictions would decrease as Election Day approached. This was not confirmed, as there appears to be no trend in accuracy ($r(10,894) = .012, p = .21$). This suggests that the inaccuracy of this self-reported vote likelihood question is not caused by failure to anticipate enthusiasm about the 2008 General Election, which included the race for US President, as Election Day neared.

***** [TABLE 3 HERE]*****

Past Behavior

Psychological research has consistently shown that one of the best predictors of future behavior is past behavior (Triandis 1977; Ouellette and Wood 1998), which prompts the question: how does past vote history relate to the accuracy of respondents' vote likelihood predictions? To examine this relationship we looked at how many of the prior two General Elections (2004 and 2006) the voter file reported each respondent as having voted in. The analyses below include those who because of their young age were ineligible to vote in the prior two General Election. Excluding those citizens does not substantively affect the results. Table 4

reports the turnout rate among those who had voted in zero, one, or two of the prior two General Elections.

***** [TABLE 4 HERE]*****

Figure 1 plots the accuracy of respondents' turnout self-predictions crossed with their recent vote history. For simplicity of presentation, this figure only includes the two extreme response options. Respondents who offered that they are "almost certain to vote" would have made accurate self-predictions when they actually did vote. Respondents who offered that they "will not vote" would have made accurate self-predictions when they actually did not vote. Table 4 and Figure 1 show that people are more accurate when their self-predictions were consistent with their past voting behavior. Specifically, respondents who had voted in the past two General Elections (column 3 in Table 4) were more accurate when predicting that they "were almost certain to vote" (93% of those predicting that they "were almost certain to vote" actually did vote; 93% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed actually casting a vote) than that they "will not vote" (76% of those predicting that they "will not vote" actually did vote; 24% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed not casting a vote). Similarly, respondents who had voted in zero of the prior two General Elections (column 1 in Table 4) were more accurate at predicting that they "will not vote" (30% of those predicting that they "will not vote" actually did vote; 70% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed not casting a vote) than that they were "almost certain to vote" (62% of those predicting that they were "almost certain to vote" actually did vote; 62% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed actually casting a vote). A logistic

regression shows that the interaction between vote history and predictions on accuracy is statistically significant (odds ratio = .12, $p < .001$).

***** [FIGURE 1 HERE]*****

Discussion

In Study 1, not only did high percentages of those who predicted that they would not vote actually vote (54.7%), but this was greater than the percentage of those predicting that they would vote who did not (13.3%). Accuracy was unrelated to time before the election, but was significantly affected by consistency with voting in recent similar elections. Specifically, accuracy was greatest when predictions were consistent with past behavior.

Since the 2008 General Election had unusually high interest and turnout, Study 2 examines the same questions in a different less prominent election, the 2009 NJ General Election.

STUDY 2

Method

The dataset for Study 2 comes from a survey of New Jersey citizens prior to the 2009 NJ General Election. These calls were not conducted with this research in mind, and was instead conducted on behalf of an anonymous 501 c(4) organization that supports nonpartisan voter registration and GOTV efforts. Participants were randomly selected from a list of registered voters with unique, valid phone numbers who met three additional criteria: 1) African American or Hispanic, 2) Voted in the 2008 General Election, 3) Did not vote in the 2006 General Election. Those who had already voted in the target election were also excluded.

Survey Method

Callers from a paid phone center introduced themselves and stated that the purpose of the call was to encourage the targets to vote. They then asked the respondent "Do you plan to [vote/be a voter] on Tuesday?" There were two variants of the self-prediction question as part of an unrelated experiment. The wording of this question did not affect the results reported in the present analysis, and so all analyses report the combined data. The response options were simply "Yes" or "No." The calls continued as part of the unrelated experiment. 13,278 responded to the vote prediction question.

***** [TABLE 5 HERE]*****

Voting History

After the election, respondent data was merged with the voter file provided by Catalist, allowing access to vote history for the 2009 NJ General Election and prior elections. Since the initial participant list was drawn from the provided voter file and callers were instructed to talk only to the target, the ID allowed for complete matching.

Results

Table 5 compares self-reported likelihood to vote in the 2009 New Jersey General Election with actual turnout records. In comparison to turnout for the 2008 General election as discussed in Study 1, overall voting rates were much lower. Less than half of registered New Jersey voters cast a ballot in the 2009 New Jersey General Election, compared to over 84 percent in 2008. Nonetheless, results were consistent with two of the hypotheses. First, 29.3 percent of those who report that they would not vote, in fact, did vote. Second, although 45.8 percent of those who said they would vote did, 54.2 percent did not. In this case, the percentage of those

who voted despite predicting that they would not (29.3%) is not larger than the percentage of those who did not vote despite predicting that they would (54.2%), though both are significantly greater than zero percent, $p < .001$.

Past Behavior

In Study 1, respondents gave more accurate predictions about voting in the upcoming general election if the prediction was consistent with their past vote history. Study 2 occurred during a gubernatorial General Election, so we looked at whether each respondent had voted in the prior two elections for statewide office (2005 and 2007). Table 6 reports the turnout rate among those who had voted in zero, one, or two of those elections.

***** [TABLE 6 HERE]*****

Figure 2 plots accuracy of respondents' self-predictions, illustrating that respondents were again more accurate when their self-predictions were consistent with their past voting behavior, and vice versa. Specifically, respondents who had voted two of the past two New Jersey General Elections (column 3 in Table 6) were more accurate when predicting that they would vote (80% of those predicting that they would vote actually did vote; 80% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed actually casting a vote) than that they would not vote (66% of those predicting that they would not vote actually did vote; 34% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed not casting a vote). Similarly, respondents who had voted in zero of the past two New Jersey General Elections (column 1 in Table 6) were more accurate at predicting that they would not vote (24% of those predicting that they would not vote actually did vote; 76% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed not

casting a vote) than that they would vote (39% of those predicting that they would vote actually did vote; 39% accuracy since accurate prediction for this response option entailed actually casting a vote). A logistic regression shows that the interaction between vote history and predictions on accuracy is statistically significant (odds ratio = .6.71, $p < .001$).

***** [FIGURE 2 HERE]*****

Discussion

Whereas Study 1 examines data from an election with very high turnout, Study 2 examines data from an election with substantially lower turnout. In fact, although two-thirds of those called reported intending to vote, less than half actually did. Consequently, accuracy was greatest among those who said they did not plan to vote. But, as in Study 1, a substantial percentage of those who predicted they would not vote actually did (29%). Further, over half of those who predicted they would vote (54%) did not. Another pattern discovered in Study 1 emerged in Study 2 as well: accuracy was greatest when predictions were consistent with past voting behavior.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The vote intention questions examined in this manuscript generated surprisingly inaccurate self-predictions, as many of those intending to vote, in fact, did not vote, and many of those intending to not vote, in fact, did vote. These errors in self-prediction were significantly correlated with whether or not respondents were predicting that they would behave consistently with their own past behavior.

There are several implications of these findings. First, as reviewed above, these findings raise questions about the usefulness of self-reported intention to vote as a dependent variable in political science research. These findings do not altogether undermine the use of this dependent variable, but rather raise new questions. For example, given the lack of predictive power of self-reported intention to vote highlighted in this manuscript, how should we interpret the meaning of a change in intention to vote, as is not uncommon in the literature described above (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1995; Mutz & Reeves 2005; Hillygus 2005; Gerber & Rogers 2009; Gerber, Huber, & Washington 2010). Does it signify an increased probability of voting, a fleeting change in motivation to vote, or possibly neither? One implication of these findings for political science research is that analysis of data involving intention to vote likely should explicitly address past vote history – either by controlling for it in observational data, or by stratifying by it in experimental data. Given that the current CCES and ANES include prospective intention to vote questions, it is likely that future research will continue to use intention to vote as a dependent variable, which makes these considerations of continuing relevance.

Second, this research has implications for voter registration policy. Recall that a large proportion of eligible voters who predicted that they would not vote actually did vote. This suggests that scheduling the deadline for voter registration in advance of an election (as all but a small number of states currently do) may reduce overall turnout. Registration in advance of an election requires that citizens anticipate their interest for casting a vote in an election, and the results we report show that people's ability to do this is limited. This is consistent with recent research suggests that Election Day registration increases overall turnout (Knack, 2001; Highton, 2004).

Third, this research has implications for political practitioners. Political pollsters commonly screen who is eligible to participate in their surveys by including only those who report being “absolutely certain to vote” or “very likely going to vote.” The present research suggests that this screen question is grossly inadequate for defining the “likely electorate.”⁴ One approach we suggest is using a combination of self-report and voter file data. For example, the present data suggests that when calling from a list of registered voters a hybrid approach incorporating both vote history and self-report could substantially increase predictive accuracy. Accounting for other variables, such as demographic characteristics available on voter files, could make this strategy even more effective. Additionally, our research has immediate implications for practitioners involved in campaign activities that use self-reported intention to vote as a screen for whether or not to target citizens with persuasive communications and/or get-out-the-vote contact.

What contributes to the fact that such a large proportion of respondents who predicted that they would not vote actually did vote? We describe and assess several potential hypotheses. First, it is possible that when asked to self-predict in a moment that is temporally distant from Election Day that respondents genuinely were not able to predict whether or not they would vote (e.g., perhaps because of a failure to anticipate the energy and excitement as Election Day neared). This would suggest that self-prediction should become more accurate as the prediction is made nearer to Election Day. Both studies suggest that this was not the case.

⁴ Since the present datasets do not include interviews from those who said they would not vote but actually did vote, we are not able to determine here how different the preferences of actual voters were from those who self-predicted that they would vote.

Second, it is conceivable that respondents expected that reporting that they would not vote would result in termination of the interview and so they strategically offered that response to politely get off the phone. If this were the case we might expect that in Study 1, among the four response options available, there would be an especially high actual turnout rate among those who reported that they “will not vote” relative to those who reported that they had a “50-50 chance” of voting. This was not the case, and Table 2 shows that turnout rate increases virtually linearly with each level of response option.

Third, it is possible that respondents failed to appreciate the social and informational experience before and on Election Day when they predicted whether or not they would vote. By failing to account for the additional motivation aroused by the excitement of others, they may have underestimated the motivation to vote they would feel when it came time to actually vote. For example, when self-predicting whether or not they would vote at a moment well before the time to actually vote, respondents may not have been aware that many of their friends were going to vote, and therefore failed to anticipate the resulting social influence (Gerber and Rogers 2009). If this is true, relatively high profile elections with high energy around Election Day and substantial spending at the end of the campaign should show higher rates of turnout among those who self-predict not voting than elections with relatively lower energy and profile. Consistent with this hypothesis, we found that the turnout rate among those who self-predicted that they would not vote in the high salience election in Study 1 (54%) was greater than the turnout rate among those who self-predicted that they would not vote in the lower salience Study 2 (36%). Though we do note the limited validity of directly comparing these two studies because they involved different voting likelihood questions, and they were conducted at different times in their respective election cycles. We hope future research will test this hypothesis directly.

Fourth, given that the respondents who reported intending to not but vote actually did vote were disproportionately regular voters, it is possible that these respondents offered answers meant to convey disaffection toward the political process rather than sincere lack of intention to vote. This would be consistent with research suggesting that many voters are disaffected with politics, and that this feeling is unrelated to political participation tendencies (Pinkleton, Austin and Fortman 1998). Future research could further examine this hypothesis in future validated vote surveys by asking questions after the self-reported intention to vote question about respondents' feelings towards politics.

Fifth, it is possible that respondents genuinely offered their best predictions about whether or not they would vote, and that these predictions were simply poor. The present data does not allow us to further assess this possibility, but it is conceivable and consistent with psychological research on the limits of behavioral prediction. Interestingly, the findings in both studies about the predictive power of past voting behavior suggest that respondents likely have access to information that would be highly predictive of whether or not they would vote (i.e., their past behavior). For reasons we do not understand, respondents seem to not correctly access or weight that information when predicting whether or not they will vote. We look forward to further research on this topic as well.

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Table 1. Matching Rates in Study 1

Date	Sample Frame	# answering intention q (n=12,979)	Matched cases (n=11,025)	% Match to file						Response Rate*
				All	Almost certain	Probably	50-50	Will not	[Don't Know]	
6/18/2008	Voter File	3,444	3,205	93%	93%	94%	97%	98%	98%	1.94%
7/24/2008	Voter File	3,937	3,699	94%	94%	92%	92%	93%	98%	2.46%
8/24/2008	Voter File	1,612	1,443	90%	90%	90%	88%	100%	100%	1.78%
9/16/2008	Voter File	1,833	1,623	89%	89%	83%	92%	76%	76%	1.81%
10/24/2008	RDD	2,153	1,055	49%	49%	47%	43%	37%	48%	1.99%

* AAPOR Response Rate 2 reflects all responses for which the turnout question is collected in the numerator, and all phone numbers initially scheduled to be called in the denominator. Research has found that non-response can be unrelated to survey bias (Merkle & Edelman, 2002).

Table 2. Study 1 Likelihood of Voting and Actual Turnout

		Actually vote?		Total N
		Yes	No	
Self-Reported Likelihood to Vote	Almost Certain	87%	13%	9,272
	Probably	74%	26%	1,004
	50-50	67%	33%	417
	Will not vote	55%	45%	201
	[Don't know]	76%	24%	131
Total		84.1%	15.9%	11,025

The question asked was: What are the chances of you voting in the election for president in November: are you almost certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or don't you think you will vote?

Note: We cannot prove that a respondent did not vote. We report here that the Secretary of State of the state in which a given respondent lives does not indicate the respondent had cast a vote.

Table 3. Study 1 Actual Turnout by Self-Predicted Turnout Over Time

		June	July	August	September	October
Self- Reported Likelihood to Vote	Almost Certain	91% (<i>n</i> = 2,675)	80% (<i>n</i> = 3,061)	89% (<i>n</i> = 1,210)	89% (<i>n</i> = 1,423)	90% (<i>n</i> = 903)
	Probably	85% (<i>n</i> = 305)	67% (<i>n</i> = 366)	78% (<i>n</i> = 138)	68% (<i>n</i> = 115)	73% (<i>n</i> = 80)
	50-50	70% (<i>n</i> = 126)	64% (<i>n</i> = 151)	64% (<i>n</i> = 53)	63% (<i>n</i> = 48)	74% (<i>n</i> = 39)
	Will not vote	68% (<i>n</i> = 60)	48% (<i>n</i> = 69)	43% (<i>n</i> = 28)	48% (<i>n</i> = 21)	61% (<i>n</i> = 23)
	[Don't know]	82% (<i>n</i> = 39)	75% (<i>n</i> = 52)	64% (<i>n</i> = 14)	75% (<i>n</i> = 16)	80% (<i>n</i> = 10)

Table 4. Study 1 Actual Turnout by Self-Predicted Turnout by Vote History

		Votes Cast in Previous Two General Elections		
		None (col 1)	One (col 2)	Two (col 3)
Self-Reported Likelihood to Vote	Almost Certain	62% (<i>n</i> = 1,080)	80% (<i>n</i> = 2,027)	93% (<i>n</i> = 6,165)
	Probably	44% (<i>n</i> = 209)	72% (<i>n</i> = 267)	88% (<i>n</i> = 528)
	50-50	42% (<i>n</i> = 120)	71% (<i>n</i> = 126)	81% (<i>n</i> = 171)
	Will not vote	30% (<i>n</i> = 66)	56% (<i>n</i> = 63)	76% (<i>n</i> = 72)
	[Don't know]	50% (<i>n</i> = 30)	69% (<i>n</i> = 32)	91% (<i>n</i> = 69)

Table 5. Study 2 Likelihood of Voting and Actual Turnout

		Actually vote?		Total N
		Yes	No	
Self-Reported Likelihood to Vote	Yes	45.8%	54.2%	8,810
	No	29.3%	70.7%	3,150
	[Don't know]	42.4%	57.6%	1,318
Total		41.5%	58.5%	13,278

The question asked was: Do you plan to [be a voter/vote] on Tuesday?

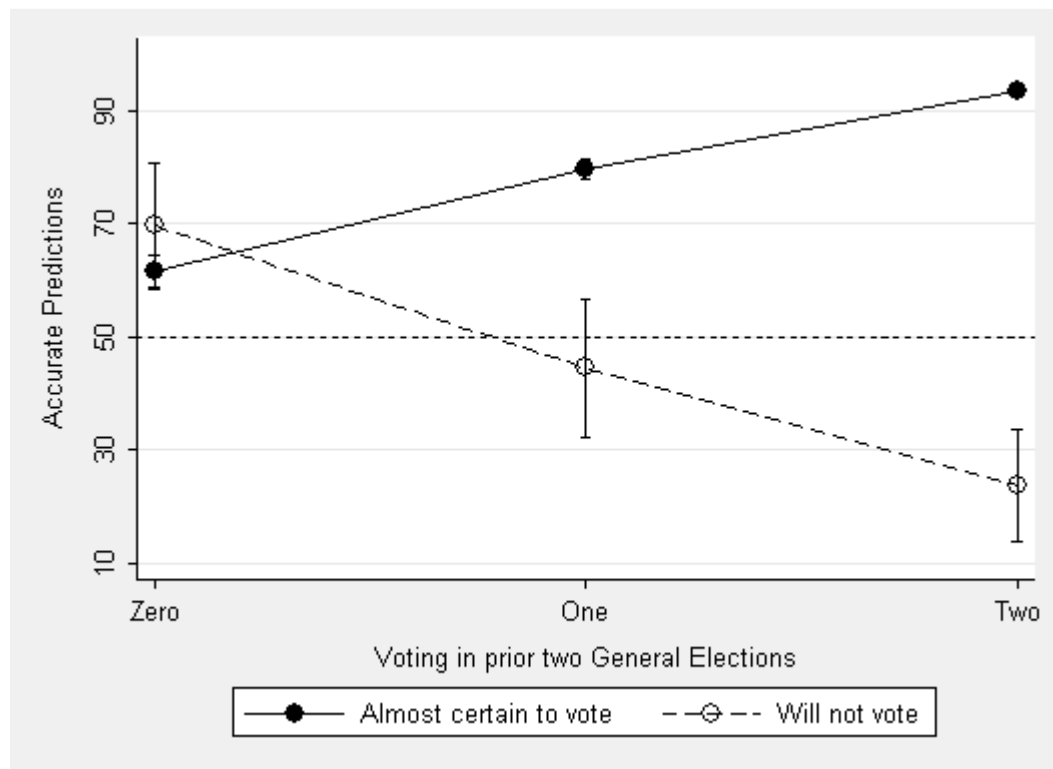
Note: We cannot prove that a respondent did not vote. We report here that the Secretary of State of NJ does not indicate the respondent cast a vote.

AAPOR Response Rate 2 was 30.2%

Table 6. Study 2 Turnout by self-reported likelihood and past voting behavior

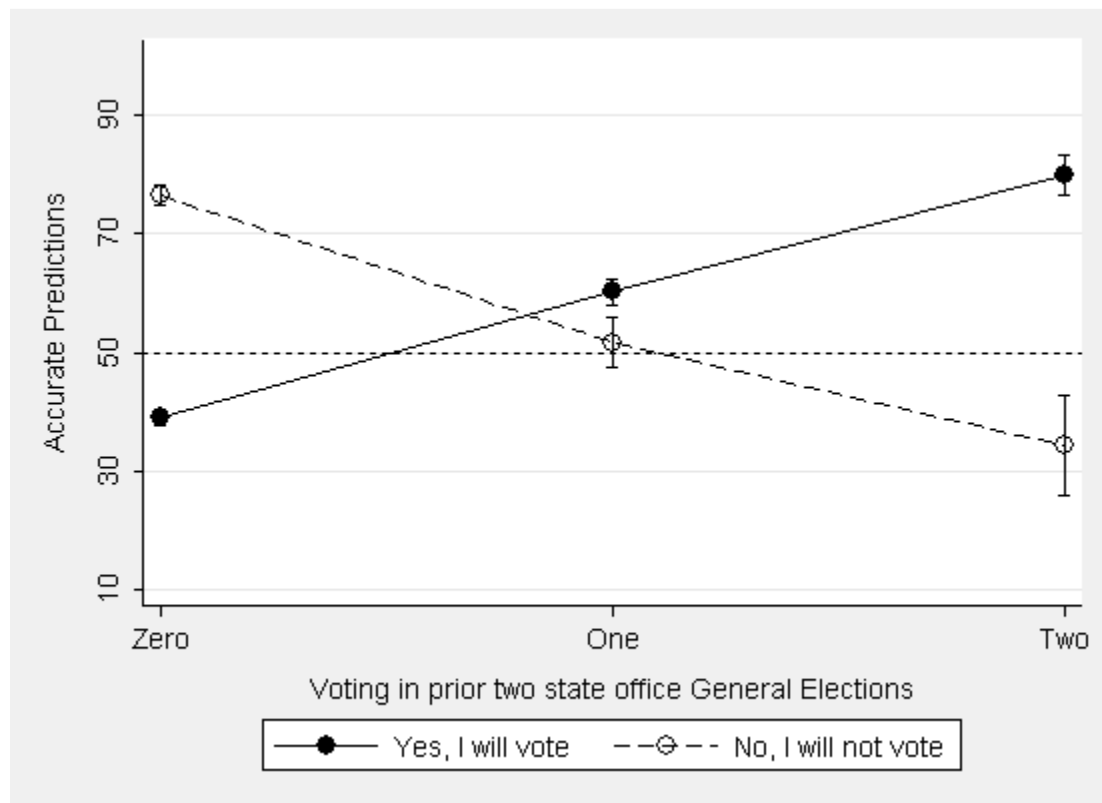
		Voting in prior two state elections		
		None (col 1)	One (col 1)	Two (col 1)
Self-Reported Likelihood to Vote	Yes	39% (<i>n</i> = 6,470)	60% (<i>n</i> = 1,803)	80% (<i>n</i> = 525)
	No	24% (<i>n</i> = 2,505)	48% (<i>n</i> = 521)	66% (<i>n</i> = 123)
	Don't Know	35% (<i>n</i> = 985)	62% (<i>n</i> = 257)	76% (<i>n</i> = 76)

Figure 1. Study 1 Respondents Are More Accurate When Predicting Past-Consistent Behavior



Accuracy refers to the percentage of respondents who actually voted after predicting “almost certain to vote” (solid line) and who did not vote after predicting “will not vote” (dashed line). Error bars indicate 95% confidence interval.

Figure 2. Study 2 Respondents Are More Accurate When Predicting Past-Consistent Behavior



Accuracy refers to the percentage of respondents who actually voted after predicting that they would vote (solid lines) and who did not vote after predicting that they would vote (dashed lines). Error bars indicate 95% confidence interval.